



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

March 14, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Lent

This Sunday's Scriptures (Revised Common Lectionary, RCL)

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21 can be read from the Lectionary Calendar at <http://www.lectionarypage.net/> - this contains a calendar of all 2021 readings.

John 3:16

Can you recite John 3:16? Most people of a certain age in the US grew up seeing this reference at sports venues, on posters, and bumper stickers – some even have tattooed the reference on their bodies. There may be no more familiar passage in all of Scripture than John 3:16:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

But how familiar are we with the two verses right before it in today's Gospel reading?

Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

The story told in today's Old Testament lesson, Numbers 21:4-9, of Moses raising a snake above his head in the wilderness in front of complaining wanderers is one of the most striking episodes in the journey of the Jewish people to the promised land. Their wandering in the desert for 40 years is a tale of hope, but also fear. That is not so much different from the journey in our lives.

At the core of this story is a universal truth: there is no venom quite as deadly as fear. Fear of change, fear of "the other," fear of illness, fear of death: fear breaks up relationships, dampens hope, and wears down faith. If we allow ourselves to live in fear for long enough, we will, like the faithless wanderers, develop "hardness of heart."

Scripture in general – including the episode in the Old Testament reading today – is a continuous narrative about God doing whatever it takes to maintain a relationship with humankind and all of creation. For indeed, God so loves the world in order that the world might be saved through him. May this be a reminder to us during this Lenten season. AMEN.

Special Prayers: for John continuing chemo treatments; for those people who continue to suffer the aftereffects of the harsh winter; those suffering during the COVID pandemic; and finally, for peace and justice within our country.